



The 2022 State of Texas Law Enforcement Achievement Award Summaries

There were many highly qualified nominees to consider for this year's State of Texas Law Enforcement Achievement Awards Ceremony. In what have arguably been some of the most difficult years in recent memory for our law enforcement officers, the following award recipients have gone above and beyond the call of duty, exceeding the normal expectations of job performance through acts of professional achievement, public service, and valor.

Public Service

The following recipients of the 2022 State of Texas Law Enforcement Achievement Award for Public Service have taken the initiative to create or participate in a program or system, which has a significant positive impact on the general population of a community, exceeding the normal expectations of job performance.

Officer Jeremy Lahar ***Houston Police Department***

This award is presented to **Officer Jeremy Lahar** of the Houston Police Department for his work in youth mentoring and community outreach in Houston.

As a young adult, Officer Jeremy Lahar was fortunate to have a mentor whom he relied upon and respected; that mentor just so happened to be a Houston Police Department Officer. Once, becoming an officer himself, Officer Lahar was always looking to 'pay it forward' and made a priority to begin "At-Risk Youth Mentoring" as soon as he had the opportunity to do so. Officer Lahar began building relationships with counselors at several elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools to identify at-risk males in Houston who could benefit from a mentorship. Once Officer Lahar gained the trust and permission of school staff, he began his mentorship program where he sets short term and long-term goals with the students and holds discussions on decision making, behavior, and academic improvement. Students are rewarded with incentives and positive affirmations when they reach their goals. Officer Lahar has personally mentored 30 Houston students and maintained a consistent and ongoing mentorship with ten of those students. In March of 2016 Officer Lahar established the "Badges and Bears" program in Houston hospitals where Officers visit children to take their minds off their illnesses for a day. In the program, Officers visit the children in the hospital, color and play with them, and allow them to choose a stuffed animal toy to keep. The Officers then answer any questions the children may ask of the law enforcement profession and then children receive a certificate and badge deeming them an "honorary police officer" for the day. Officer Lahar secures donations from around the Houston area for the program which significantly impacts the children's lives, many of whom only receive visits from immediate family and hospital staff.

After working with the Office of Public Affairs and participating in community engagement, Officer Lahar envisioned the expansion of the Houston Police Department's relationship with the citizens of Houston through fun, educational interaction on varying public safety topics. Thus, "Feet on the Street" was born. This program places Officers on the street in conversation with willing citizens that a recorded and published in

online and social media platforms. In the video, which the citizen consents to recording for the purpose of being shared on social media, Officer Lahar will ask a public safety trivia question and allow the citizen to answer. Officer Lahar utilizes the power of comedy while maintaining professionalism and provides the answer to the trivia question along with helpful tips to avoid becoming victimized. Another tool HPD uses to directly connect with the community is the “Triple C Podcast”, also created by Officer Lahar, allows communication with Houston citizens in a controlled environment with an emphasis on relational policing. The podcast, “Triple C”, stands for Cops Communicating with the Community, and includes several segments including the safety and crime prevention segment, the relational policing segment, the feet on the street segment, the what’s up HPD segment, and the community engagement and honors segments. Officer Lahar. Along with two additional officers. Team up monthly to produce the 45-to-60-minute podcasts complete with guest speakers and pre-planned segments.

Lastly, Officer Lahar has taken the initiative to remind Houston’s senior citizens that HPD is there to support them. He established the “Senior Citizen Interaction Program” allowing officers to visit multiservice centers across the Greater Houston area where they hold discussions and play board games with the senior citizens in their community. Topics of discussion include matters specific to the senior citizen community such as identity theft, phone fraud, and personal safety. Officer Lahar’s goal for the program is to leave each location with the senior citizens feeling more confident in handling themselves when met with various situations in which their safety may be jeopardized.

Police Chief Allen Banks ***Round Rock Police Department***

This award is being presented to Chief Allen Banks of the Round Rock Police Department for initiating the Operation Front Porch program in his community with the goal of preventing package theft during the holiday season.

Chief Banks came up with the idea for Operation Front Porch and started the initiative in December 2017 as a novel way for residents to prevent packages being stolen off their front porch. Each holiday season, residents are invited to have their online purchases shipped directly to the RRPD station, ensuring safe delivery and giving residents peace of mind. Each package shipped to our station is one less opportunity for package theft, which allows our officers and dispatchers to focus on other calls for service.

Since its implementation, Operation Front Porch has grown each year leading up the pandemic and the program continued in 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, with volunteers providing 124 hours of administrative service implementing the program. The program received 30 packages in 2017, 380 in 2018, and 474 in 2019. Prior to the start of this program, December reports of package theft were rising each year and have since stagnated.

The program works by allowing residents to have their online purchases shipped directly to the Round Rock Police Station. The purchaser can address the shipment to their own name, with the station’s address for delivery and can receive the package with their photo ID.

Chief Banks participated in dozens of media interviews to promote the program and spoke with numerous law enforcement agencies across North America regarding how to implement similar programs in their communities. Agencies across the State of Texas and the United States have inquired about this program including the Schertz and Comanche police departments in Texas, the Tonawanda Police Department in New York, and the Broward County Sheriff’s Office in Florida. The International Association for Chiefs of Police chose Operation Front Porch for its 2019 Leadership in Crime Prevention Award.

In 2019, Operation Front Porch received 408 placements on television and radio nationwide. All Austin and Round Rock news outlets covered the program, resulting in 367,152 local impressions for a local market publicity value of \$43,416 and was picked up by national programming including NPR's Marketplace, ABC's Good Morning America, and Comedy Central's The Daily Show. According to media monitoring services, the estimated total viewership was 7.2 million nationwide, totaling a value of \$447,000.

The Operation Front Porch program created by Chief Banks was an innovative solution to prevent an area of seasonally heightened crime in his community, providing an example of how to create a solution for a problem in one community which can be shared with and implemented in other communities with similar issues.

Constable Paul L. Leal
Williamson County Constable, Precinct 4

This award is being presented to Constable Paul L. Leal of the Williamson County Constable, Precinct 4 for his community assistance efforts following the 2021 ice storm which devastated many communities throughout the State of Texas. In February of 2021 Texas was hit with a winter storm leaving thousands of Texans without water or electricity, causing hundreds of fatalities across the State.

It was only 45 days into his first term when the February 2021 ice storm ravaged Texas. Constable Paul Leal ditched his patrol car and hopped in his personal 4x4 truck and went on to 23 rescue individuals. Not only did he personally perform these emergency rescue services, but he welcomed the individuals into the safety of his own home and provided them with heat and electricity. Constable Leal worked 12 to 16 hour shifts to deliver over 600 pounds of food to 16 homes and 46 apartment units. He delivered countless loads of firewood to citizens in his community so that they could keep warm and cook and he helped get 7 stranded vehicles back on the road.

The local HEB was unable to open without having working bathrooms available so Constable Leal located a porta-potty which he delivered to the HEB, again in his personal truck, so that the store could re-open for the hundreds of customers waiting outside to purchase food, water, essentials, and emergency supplies during the deadly, record-breaking winter storm. In addition, Constable Leal arranged to have 500 gallons of non-drinkable water brought to the HEB so employees could continue to run the store's freezers.

Constable Leal went above and beyond for his community during and in the aftermath of the historic ice storm. He was giving out his personal cell number, even putting it on social media for anyone in need. He used his personal social media accounts and the Constable's Office account to coordinate food, water and firewood donations throughout his community which had a widespread positive impact throughout the town. Constable Leal truly showed what it means to be a servant of the community during these events.

Elizabeth Duong
Arlington Police Department

This award is being presented to Elizabeth Duong of the Arlington Police Department for her success with the MAY, Mentoring Arlington Youth Program Initiative, her involvement in the SPARK program, and the 20/20 "Turning Vision Into a Reality" Initiative curriculum that she personally designed; her contributions to the youth in her community will have a positive impact for years to come.

Investing in the youth of today is arguably the most meaningful outreach that law enforcement can participate in. Officer Duong is a member of the East Arlington FOOT Patrol and participates in multiple mentoring outreach initiatives in the community. For multiple years Officer Duong has participated in the Mentoring Arlington Youth Program, which has received substantial media attention and numerous awards including from

the United States Department of Justice Community Oriented Police Office, showing extreme dedication. In the program, Officer Duong makes herself available to the students she has mentored for support, parent visits, and academic assistance if needed, which includes maintaining weekly contact with a 7th grade student she is assigned to. Officer Duong mentored additional students in her community through the Students and Police Acquiring Relationships and Knowledge Program, or SPARK. Through the SPARK program she mentored 5th and 6th grade female students at Lynn Hale Elementary School as well as assisting with the campus's career day.

In late 2019, as Officer Duong was preparing to have her own child, she came up with a way to help the youth in her community by creating the 20/20 "Turning Vision Into a Reality" Initiative, a youth development program curriculum which was implemented over the course of the 2020 school year. The lesson plans are designed to instill vision, values, and goals in today's youth. The program is specifically geared towards equipping 5th and 6th grade students with life skills and includes group activities to make the message memorable.

Officer Duong has shown a true dedication to engaging with and mentoring the youth in her community in both her professional and her personal life. She attends church in the district she serves and holds a volunteer position as a youth leader and music leader in the church where she designs lesson plans that teach life skills, helps plan activities, and handles bookkeeping for the church.

Constable George Morales ***Travis County Constable, Precinct 4***

This award is being presented to Constable George Morales of the Travis County Constable, Precinct 4 for his continued dedication to his community through public service, specifically for his establishment of a drive-thru COVID-19 vaccination clinic, acting as a model throughout Travis County.

Constable Morales has shown his dedication to public service by setting up community events to provide services and resources to the citizens of Travis County. In order to put on these events, Constable Morales solicits donations from the community, however, he often uses his personal out-of-pocket funds to organize these events. In 2021, Constable Morales distributed over five thousand backpacks filled with school supplies to children in Austin schools. For Thanksgiving, he distributed over three thousand full turkey dinners including sides to his community at a drive-thru Thanksgiving meal event.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Constable Morales set up a drive-thru vaccination shot clinic in the parking lot of the Travis County Precinct 4 office which is believed to be the first of its kind in the State. On the first weekend that the vaccine was made publicly available, the Travis County Precinct 4 office had great success with the clinic and was able to vaccinate 300 individuals per day, totaling 660 individuals in the first weekend of the vaccine clinic which continued for two months. This model was then used to set up the major drive-thru vaccination clinics throughout Travis County.

He assigned half of his deputies to provide traffic control and security for these drive-thru clinic locations and assigned half of his staff to community outreach by going door to door in areas with low vaccination turnout to inform citizens of the vaccine clinic locations and times.

Constable Morales was so instrumental in getting people vaccinated that the county assigned the EOC Covid response team to his office. Travis County was so impressed with Constable Morales' community outreach methods that they assigned him an additional five deputies and eight additional staff members to provide security, traffic control, and logistical support for all the major vaccine clinics throughout Austin; and he acts as the main contact for all Travis County vaccination locations.

Constable George Morales provided all these services to his community while dealing with his own personal losses of his father and brother to the COVID-19 virus because he said he “didn’t want anyone else to lose a family member to COVID,” and is a truly dedicated public servant.

Professional Achievement

The following recipients of the 2022 State of Texas Law Enforcement Achievement Award for Professional Achievement have, through personal initiative, fixity of purpose, persistence, or endeavor, created a program, organization, or system, which has a significant positive impact on the law enforcement profession.

Captain Carrie White ***North Richland Hills Police Department***

This award is being presented to Captain Carrie White of the North Richland Hills Police Department for her role in creating the Women of Law Enforcement (WOLE) Conference. Captain White embodies the very best in law enforcement with her uplifting spirit and desire to help others. Captain White has spent her career working tirelessly to help others achieve their goals all while producing some of the best leaders the North Richland Hills Police Department has to offer.

In 2013, Chief Jimmy Perdue of the North Richland Hills Police Department came up with the idea of empowering women in the field of policing through an annual conference. He wanted to provide them with a strong network of leaders to support, mentor, and train them in the many aspects of law enforcement. He took this idea to then Lieutenant, Carrie White, to bring this vision to life. As a natural-born mentor, Carrie knew exactly what to do. She attended the IACP Women's Leadership Institute to gain direction in developing female leaders of law enforcement and surrounded herself with a robust board of leaders to better equip our future women law enforcement leaders for the challenges we know lie ahead.

The Women of Law Enforcement organization started in 2013 with the purpose of promoting women in law enforcement and helping develop the next generation of diverse law enforcement leaders, and as of today, thousands of women have attended the conferences held in the North Texas area to gain some of the best leadership training offered in law enforcement. Carrie has directly touched the lives of hundreds of future women leaders and successfully sparked their desire to achieve their goals. She has given back to law enforcement far more than she has ever received and she continues to work tirelessly to pave the way for female law enforcement executives across the country. Throughout her over 20 years of dedicated service, Captain Carrie White has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on law enforcement in Texas, and across the country, and through the WOLE Conference she will continue to have a positive impact on future generations of women law enforcement leaders for years to come.

Former Chief of Police Jeffrey Yarbrough ***Round Rock Independent School District Police Department***

This award is being presented to Former Round Rock ISD Police Chief Jeffrey Yarbrough for his work in establishing the Round Rock Independent School District’s Four Pillars of School Policing model focusing on school safety, racial equity, behavioral health, and student advocacy. This transformative program created and implemented by Former Chief Yarbrough is aimed at serving the whole student while meeting each individual student at their needs and is a pathway to postmodern school policing.

Chief Yarbrough recognized the need for conceptual change in school policing in order to reduce the negative and long-term impacts of criminal justice interaction that many students experience during the most critical years of adolescent development. The model has a team of social workers built into the program as part of the

Behavioral Health Pillar who work alongside district officers to identify non-law enforcement solutions to address student needs and promote positive outcomes. These social workers assist students in crisis and provide social, emotional, behavioral, mental health services, and family services. Round Rock ISD Police Department is one of the first, if not the first ever, school district police departments in the country to hire social workers to assist students in crisis and with the addition of the Behavioral Health Department has been able to effectively recognize students experiencing crisis irrespective of their behavior mimicking criminal actions and therefore provide them with the proper intervention and resources.

The Equity Pillar of the model focuses on student diversity and recognizing that every student has a unique set of needs. Officers train in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion to develop a greater understanding from a cultural, social, racial, and economic perspective to ensure that every student has a fair and equitable chance to succeed.

The Safety and Security Pillar of the model includes the advanced training staff and officers receive in areas of threat mitigation, active shooter response, mental health, first aid, trust based relational intervention, LGBTQIA+, equity and other areas of specialization. Chief Yarbrough created a mass communication system, the first of its type in the country, to provide instant notification of campus threats and critical incidents in real time by broadcasting the messaging across all available platforms including campus intercoms, computers, projectors, and phones.

Because of Chief Yarbrough, every officer in Round Rock ISD is an advocate for each and every student. The fourth pillar of the Four Pillars of School Policing is based around student and finding successful diversionary solutions to help students long term. Chief Yarbrough worked with juvenile justice centers and the district attorney's offices to establish alternative solutions and identify resources for students in challenging situations.

Thanks to Former Chief Yarbrough, the Round Rock ISD Police Department hopes to act as a leader in school policing with these Four Pillars of School Policing by engaging in equitable and unbiased student advocacy and providing the safest environment for each and every student so that they may reach their full potential.

Commander John J. Matthews ***Ovilla Police Department***

This award is being presented to Commander John J. Matthews of the Ovilla Police Department who has served the citizens of Texas for over 35 years and has shown his dedication to law enforcement through his advocacy. Commander Matthews has personally contributed to dozens of initiatives that have significantly and positively impacted the advancement of law enforcement policies, practices, and training in the state and across the country.

Commander Matthews has a plethora of accomplishments under his belt, including his capture of a Dallas serial killer, Charles Albright, "The Eyeball Killer". Commander Matthews created the Ponder Police Department and served as its first Chief of Police. He was instrumental in developing the Dallas Police Departments' Community Policing Program, developed the first national Safe School Initiative and assisted the Texas School Safety Center in its formative years while also spending his free time serving on National Officer Safety and Wellness Committees.

Commander Matthews has helped to establish a number of safety and community policing programs throughout his career including the CASS, Creating a Safer School program following the infamous Columbine High School shooting in the mid 1990's, and the Dallas Police Department's Interactive Community Policing (ICP) program, increasing crime watch initiatives across the city. Following the attack on September 11, 2001, the National Sheriff's Association asked Commander Matthews to reboot the Neighborhood Watch program into a valid and proactive crime prevention tool and he subsequently crafted a hands-on training program to

train citizens in spotting and reporting crimes and create effective watch programs in their communities. The program went on to train over ten thousand officers across the country who then trained over one million citizens and was so successful that one of the Neighborhood Watch toolkits was put on display in President George W. Bush's Presidential Library and Museum.

Commander Matthews has served as the Executive Director of Law Enforcement Initiatives for the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial and in 2014 he founded Destination Zero to reduce line-of-duty deaths and provide national recognition for agencies that have succeeded in improving officer safety and wellness. Matthews also developed the Connecting Youth and Communities with Law Enforcement (CYCLE), the De-escalation a Holistic Approach training program, and the Public Safety De-escalation Tactics for Veterans in Crisis program that has been delivered to over 8,000 peace officers nationwide. In 2004, Commander Matthews worked with the COPS Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the U.S. Department of Justice in creating the Jail Information Model to better manage intelligence information obtained in correctional facilities.

It is undeniable that Commander Matthews has significantly impacted law enforcement in Texas and the U.S. through his dedicated work in community engagement and policing.

Detective Jeff Rich
Plano Police Department

This award is being presented to Detective Jeff Rich, a 28-year veteran of the Plano Police Department, for his role in educating law enforcement, not only in Texas, but worldwide, in crimes against children, specifically in protecting children from on-line predators. Through his education of law enforcement, he has helped a countless number of children escape their predators and prevented an infinite number of additional potential victims.

Detective Rich is the Internet Crimes Against Children/Technical Investigations Detective for the Plano PD's Criminal Investigations Division and is responsible for investigating tips from the community and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children related to online crimes against children and the technical exploitation of both child and adult victims and has been assigned to the FBI as a Violent Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking Unit Task Force Officer.

Detective Rich is a Master Texas Peace Officer with over 32 years of experience in Law Enforcement and has been cross designated as a Special Deputy United States Marshal by the FBI since 2007, enabling him to investigate and enforce federal violations of law in addition to Texas statutes and has testified in both State and Federal court where he has been designated as an expert in these fields.

In August 2021, Detective Rich, along with Lieutenant Alicia Nors, implemented a weekly training program for all Plano PD detectives so that ongoing training could be conducted amid the pandemic. This program had speakers presenting each week providing resources and knowledge shared across different violations.

Detective Rich is a Digital Extraction Technician who has been trained by the United States Department of Justice and the FBI in computer forensic artifact recovery and maintains the Plano PD's Cellebrite program which consists of four devices and seven operators. He also serves as an Intelligence Officer for the Plano PD's Emergency Services Unit in high-risk SWAT situations providing intel and investigative resources to tactical members as they are deployed on scene, increasing safety and positive outcomes in dangerous situations.

Detective Rich directs software programmers and developers in the design of software used by over 15,000 law enforcement officers/employees in over 66 countries around the world with over 8,000 of those officers/agents

in the United States and over 600 in the State of Texas alone and is one of eight primary administrators for this program which is funded through the Department of Justice for the United States.

Detective Rich is a regular speaker for the Dallas Crimes Against Children Conference, the Department of Justice Internet Crimes Against Children Collaboration Conference, the Massachusetts Attorney General Conference, the San Diego Child Maltreatment Conference, and the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest, Hungary, where he speaks about the online exploitation of children to national and international audiences.

Detective Rich is also a part of the FBI's Violent Crimes Against Children International Task Force where Law Enforcement Officers from 56 countries are brought together yearly to collaborate and work toward ending the online exploitation of children. Detective Rich works with and presents at the INTERPOL headquarters in Lyon, France where he shares his knowledge and experience and learns from global law enforcement.

Plano PD Chief of Police Ed Drain stated that, "No other law enforcement officer in the world has advanced the detection and apprehension of on-line predators as much as Detective Rich has done over the last twenty years," when he submitted Detective Rich's nomination.

Valor

The following recipients of the 2022 State of Texas Law Enforcement Achievement Award for Valor have performed an act of heroism or bravery exceeding the normal expectations of job performance, such as placing one's own life in jeopardy to save another's life, preventing serious bodily injury to another, or preventing the consequences of a criminal act.

Trooper Joseph Lopez of the Texas Department of Public Safety

This award is being presented to Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Joseph Lopez of San Antonio for his valorous life-saving actions in assisting a woman who had been injured by a passing train in Eagle Pass, Texas.

While on assignment for Operation Lone Star in Eagle Pass, Trooper Joseph S. Lopez and another Trooper were patrolling the rail yard off FM 1588 near Deer Run on July 26, 2021. While on patrol, Trooper Lopez observed a young Hispanic male migrant walking near the railroad tracks. The Troopers stopped and made contact with the man who then stated that a female had suffered a leg amputation while attempting to jump onto a passing train. The troopers then located a migrant woman lying on the ground near the train tracks; her left leg had been severed by the train she had attempted to jump onto.

Trooper Joseph Lopez acted immediately to stop the bleeding by applying two tourniquets to her upper left leg and alerted the Eagle Pass Command Post to request emergency medical services. Trooper Lopez spoke to the woman and comforted her while continuing to evaluate her injuries. Trooper Lopez effectively communicated with DPS to quickly direct emergency responders to the location.

Upon the arrival of emergency responders, the female was stabilized and transported by ambulance to Fort Duncan Hospital. She was later flown to University Hospital in San Antonio, TX in stable condition. Had Trooper Lopez not acted so quickly to compress the woman's wound, she would have likely bled out, losing not only her leg but her life. Thanks to the valorous life-saving measures and actions Trooper Lopez performed, the woman's life was saved.

Sergeant Michael Chitty of the Arlington Police Department

This award is being presented to Sergeant Michael Chitty of the Arlington Police Department for risking his own safety to save two individuals from a burning vehicle that had crashed on the highway.

On Friday May 10, 2019, Sergeant Michael Chitty was on his way to work in full uniform. As he was entering Grand Prairie city limits, driving westbound on Interstate 30, he witnessed an accident involving two vehicles, one of which was engulfed in flames.

A SUV had lost control, struck a crash attenuator, and then struck a van, which caused the van to overturn and catch fire. Sergeant Chitty immediately stopped and ran to the vehicle that was on fire to check for any occupants. He saw there were two people inside and with no regard for his own safety, he began to pull the occupants out, dragging them to safety.

Emergency Medical Services was on scene and began immediate medical care and transported the occupants to Methodist Dallas Medical Center for treatment of what thankfully ended up being non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the other vehicle had fled the scene and Sergeant Chitty provided any information he could to Grand Prairie Police Department regarding the suspect.

Once the scene was under control and the occupants were receiving medical treatment, Sergeant Chitty went on his way to report for his shift, without mentioning the incident to his supervisors. It wasn't until Deputy Chief Riddle was made aware of Sergeant Chitty's actions and contacted him to confirm his involvement, that Sergeant Chitty confirmed that it was indeed him that had stopped at the scene. Sergeant Chitty stated that he was just trying to make sure the occupants of the vehicle were safe, and get to work on time. In his mind, the incident was no big deal, and being the extremely humble man that he is, did not want attention drawn to his heroic actions that morning. Although, the accident received significant media attention on all major news networks and Sergeant Chitty was interviewed later that morning for his heroic efforts in pulling the occupants from the fire to safety.

The shocking video footage of the crash clearly shows the van fully engulfed in flames and there is no doubt had Sergeant Chitty not stopped to assist, the occupants would have suffered life threatening if not fatal injuries from the fire. Thanks to Sergeant Chitty's valorous life-saving actions on that day, the individuals' lives were spared.

Officer Sergio Dominguez of the Fort Worth Police Department

This award is being presented to Officer Sergio Dominguez of the Fort Worth Police Department for his actions in pursuing and terminating a homicidal threat during an incident on December 19th of 2018.

On December 19th, 2018, Officer Sergio Dominguez was notified of a suicidal male in his patrol area who was live streaming to social media, filming himself firing a gun into the air and placing the gun in his own mouth. The male expressed both suicidal ideations as well as homicidal ideations toward officers.

The location of the suspect was unknown, and Officer Dominguez began to search the area for the suspect. While searching for the suspect, Officer Dominguez was alerted via radio that several miles south of his location a patrol sergeant had been ambushed by the suspect and fired upon.

The sergeant was able to transmit the location and vehicle description of the suspect and vehicle while she was evading his pursuit of her. Officer Dominguez immediately raced to the scene to assist. Prior to his arrival in

the area, another officer arrived on scene and pulled up behind the suspect. The suspect had been firing into the air and circling in the roadway in front of the sergeant, weaving in between civilian vehicles.

As the first responding officer approached the suspect, the suspect backed his vehicle abruptly and turned. He fired on the officer through his passenger window, striking the patrol vehicle multiple times. The officer returned fire, striking the suspect's vehicle, and causing the suspect to speed away. When Officer Dominguez arrived on scene the gunfire from the first engagement was audible and the suspect's vehicle crossed directly in front of him. Disregarding his own personal safety, Officer Dominguez took immediate decisive action to identify, pursue, and stop the suspect from continuing his homicidal rampage.

Due to the chaos, it was not immediately apparent which of several similar vehicles in front of Officer Dominguez was the suspect's vehicle. Officer Dominguez closely pursued the suspect at over 60mph and was able to positively identify the suspect's vehicle by the description and license plate.

At the moment that he confirmed the vehicle, the suspect began firing at Officer Dominguez out of the driver's window. Officer Dominguez continued to pursue the suspect and returned fire from inside his patrol vehicle while driving. In an extreme demonstration of both bravery and skill, Officer Dominguez was able to port the windshield glass on his patrol vehicle and strike the suspect. Being struck by gunfire caused the suspect to lose control of his vehicle, which swerved to the left across the roadway and struck a light pole, coming to a halt.

The suspect did not cease his attack and despite his wounds continued attempting to access additional loaded firearms in the vehicle, including a shotgun, rifle, and multiple handguns. Identifying this, Officer Dominguez maintained the momentum of the fight, continuing to engage the suspect with his duty pistol from inside his patrol vehicle while also positioning his patrol vehicle to pin the suspect's vehicle against the light pole.

Officer Dominguez performed multiple, precise emergency reloads of his pistol both as he exited his patrol vehicle, enabling him to keep the suspect pinned down in his vehicle. The suspect was taking cover behind his vehicle but, despite multiple attempts, was unable to utilize any of his firearms.

Recognizing the suspect's continued intent to kill police officers he began to move laterally to engage the suspect from a more effective angle while continuing to fire. Once he had achieved a position of tactical advantage and having no other options to stop the suspect's homicidal behavior, Officer Dominguez displayed superior self-control and marksmanship skill by slowing his rate of fire and delivering several shots to the suspect's head. This finally terminated the threat the suspect posed.

Officer Dominguez's actions on this day are an example of the highest degree of heroism and valor, but also an expert skillset obtained through years of dedication to training and professionalism. In what might be considered the hardest decision and action that a law enforcement officer will ever have to make, his actions assuredly saved multiple officers and members of the public from serious injury or death. His conduct serves as an example for all members of the law enforcement profession to strive towards.

Deputy Colton Lowe
Deputy Roger Smith
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

The following awards are being presented to **Deputies Colton Lowe and Roger Smith of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office for their valorous actions** responding to a lightning strike victim during Tropical Storm Imelda.

On September 19th, 2019, Jefferson County, Texas was impacted by Tropical Storm Imelda. SWAT team members and other special operations teams were activated for the purpose of conducting high water rescues

with shallow water boats and high-water vehicles. One of the teams responded to a report of a victim of electrocution or possibly a lightning strike during the peak of the storm. Due to the intense amount of rainfall, most roads were underwater and could not be accessed by vehicles. Emergency medical crews had reported they could not get to the call due to the high water. The SWAT officers in a MRAP vehicle responded to the area and began traversing in the high water in an effort to rescue the victim; however, when the team arrived, it was determined the water was too deep to continue down the private drive in the MRAP vehicle.

Deputies Colton Lowe and Roger Smith made the decision to exit the MRAP and attempt to reach the victim by walking through the extremely high water, which was at waist deep in some areas. During this rescue attempt, lightning strikes were being reported at approximately 72 strikes per minute and the conditions were extreme. Deputy Lowe and Deputy Smith searched on foot until they located the house where the victim was. The family of the victim had placed him on a table in order to keep him out of the high water that was inside the residence. The family had initiated CPR on the unconscious victim. Deputies Lowe and Smith immediately took over with assisting CPR and began to prepare a plan to evacuate the victim. It was determined that an extremely high four-wheel drive truck owned by the victim could possibly make it through the high water. The truck had only room in it for a family member to drive, so the deputies loaded the unconscious victim into the bed of the truck. The truck was driven through the water while the weather conditions had deteriorated in further. Deputy Lowe and Smith continued CPR on the victim in the outside conditions for approximately an hour during the travel.

Due to the severe weather conditions, the victim was moved into a space inside the truck along with Deputy Smith who continued CPR until the truck reached the hospital where the victim was treated by the ER staff.

Deputies Lowe and Smith displayed extreme courage during very hazardous conditions in an effort to rescue the victim. They had no regard to their own safety by making a decision to exit the MRAP and continue on foot in the high water and extreme weather. These two deputies continued to conduct CPR while also coordinating a plan to move the victim for medical assistance and did so under extreme stress. Their actions reflected Honor and dedication to serving the citizens of Jefferson County, Texas.

Deputy Colton Lowe and Deputy Roger Smith displayed the utmost effort and bravery in attempting to save a life during Tropical Storm Imelda on the morning of September 19, 2019.

Officer Kenneth Parada
University of Texas System Police Department

This award is being presented to Officer Kenneth Parada of the University of Texas System Police Department for his valorous, life-saving actions on April 27th, 2021.

On April 27th, 2021, Officer Parada responded to a call for a suicidal person, threatening to jump from a garage near the University of Texas Campus. The parking structure is a six-story garage with a waist high railing around the perimeter. Upon arrival, Officer Parada noticed a person standing at the edge of the garage. He ran up the stairs to discover the person was standing outside of the railing on the edge of the wall. The person was clearly showing signs of distress and would not allow Officer Parada to approach closer than 40 yards without making movements leading Officer Parada to believe the person would jump.

Officer Parada attempted to start a dialog with the person across the long distance to which the person responded, but in a foreign language. Officer Parada continued speaking, and the person eventually started to converse with him in English. Officer Parada feigned not being able to hear the conversation due to the distance and started closing the gap to about 20 yards. The person told him to stop and began showing more signs they were going to jump. Officer Parada continued talking, asking the person about their personal life, discovering

that the person had children about the same age as Parada's own children. Parada used this connection to continue the conversation with the person as other officers were arriving and preparing to start negotiations.

Officer Parada noticed the person kept looking at their cell phone and asked the person if they were looking at photographs of their children. The person acknowledged that they were looking at photos, and Officer Parada took the chance to move closer, asking if he could also look at the photos. The person agreed, and set their phone down, but then moved further away. This allowed Officer Parada to approach within five or six feet of the person. As the person moved away, they stepped down to another ledge positioning their head and shoulders at level with the top of the railing, with a twelve-inch space between their body and the railing so that they were no longer leaning or holding onto the railing. Their heels were over the edge of the building's ledge, so that only the front part of their foot was on the ledge. The person then disengaged conversing with Officer Parada and started focusing on the ground six-stories below.

The person turned away from Officer Parada and began to readjust their feet as if they were preparing to jump. Officer Parada described the person as letting go of the railing, closing their eyes, and swaying backwards. Officer Parada seized the moment during a time the person turned away to look down to the ground, lunging at the subject to grab him in a way that he could not slip from his grip. Officer Parada then pulled the man over the railing and back to the safety of the garage. Officer Parada was able to move with speed and precision to grab the person and pull them to safety in what appeared to be one motion, which he had clearly been mentally preparing to do so during his conversation with the man.

Officer Parada placed his own life in jeopardy to save the life of a distraught person, seeking to end their life by jumping from a high structure. The person could have jumped, once Officer Parada made the move to grab them, pulling him over the railing with them. Officer Parada could have waited for the negotiations team to try and talk the person down, but instead, saw the opportunity to make the save and took it. That opportunity was only available because of the trust that Officer Parada gained by building a rapport with the person. Thanks to Officer Parada's valorous actions which saved this man's life, he is alive to see another day and his children still have their father.

Payton Brandenberger, Palestine Police Department
Brad Colman, Anderson County Sheriff's Office
Tabitha Frawner, Anderson County Sheriff's Office
Leonard Sandifer, Texas Department of Public Safety

On October 19, 2019, **Deputy Brad Colman** went to a mobile home park in Anderson County investigating a stolen vehicle. Deputy Colman encountered the stolen vehicle and possible suspect. The suspect refused to answer questions and jumped in the stolen truck and attempted to flee running into Colman's patrol car several times. Deputy Colman using great restraint attempted to disable the stolen vehicle firing into the tires and radiator. The suspect backed into an adjoining trailer getting stuck, exited the truck and began to fire at Deputy Colman. Colman returned fire and was struck in the right femur. Colman continued to engage the suspect even though he was getting weak from blood loss. Colman found cover behind an adjoining trailer continuing to engage the suspect. The suspect ran toward Colman's patrol vehicle at this point Deputy Colman was able to wound the suspect in the arm. The suspect took Colman's patrol vehicle as Colman fired into the vehicle reloading once and clearing a jam narrowly missing the suspect. Colman alerted fellow officer that he had been hit and needed a tourniquet and the direction the suspect fled in his vehicle.

Sgt. Tabitha Frawner arrived at the scene and alertly thinking removed her hand-held radio cord and used it as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding from Deputy Colman's leg.

Sgt. Frawner was very calm and reassuring to Colman and also took charge of the scene directing other deputies.

Sgt. Frowners' actions saved Deputy Colman's life and leg. She exhibited great courage and calmness during this incident.

Trooper Leonard Sandifer responded to the scene and replaced the radio cord tourniquet that Sgt. Frawner had applied with a manufactured tourniquet. Trooper Sandifer's quick response aided in the saving of Deputy Colman's life and leg.

Trooper Sandifer was calm and reassuring to Deputy Colman and for his assistance we are forever grateful. Trooper Sandifer exhibited courage and valor in his actions to help save Colman's life.

Officer Payton Brandenberger was involved in a chase with the shooting suspect that injured Deputy Colman. The suspect had stolen another vehicle and Brandenberger gave chase. The suspect backed into his patrol unit causing injury to Brandenberger's head. Officer Brandenberger jumped into another unit and engaged the suspect until he wrecked out again and ran into the woods where later he encountered a DPS Trooper in a final shootout.

Officer Brandenberger acted with courage and valor and was of great assistance in bringing this violent encounter to an end.

Deputy Colman exhibited great courage and valor and restraint during this horrific situation.

Corporal Vidal Farias
Officer Diego Aranda
Officer Oscar Guzman
Officer Arnoldo Villarreal, Jr.
Mission Police Department

The following awards are being presented to **Patrol Corporal Vidal Farias, Patrol Officer Diego Aranda, Patrol Officer Oscar Guzman, and Patrol Officer Arnoldo Villarreal Jr. of the Mission Police Department** for their valorous actions in response to an incident in which a mother and child were severely injured by a man with a machete.

On July 30, 2020, the Mission Police Department received a call from a woman who stated that her neighbor had been attacked and was bleeding profusely. When **Officer Oscar Guzman** arrived on the scene, he was waved down by a frantic woman who then directed him to the victim who had sustained life-threatening injuries. Her fingers were severed, and she had large lacerations on her face and head. The victim was unable to verbally communicate but kept desperately pointing to her house and groaning. The neighbor, who had been a witness, informed Officer Guzman that the victim had been attacked with a machete. The witness then informed him that the victim's three-year-old child was still inside the suspect's home with the assailant.

At that moment Officer Guzman made the critical decision to request backup and proceed to the suspect's home where the child was still located, understanding the seriousness of the attack and the potential danger to the child's life. As Officer Guzman crossed the street, **Officers Diego Aranda and Arnoldo Villarreal Jr.** arrived on the scene. Officer Guzman quickly briefed them, and the three officers approached the residence together through the open garage, calling out to the suspect to identify themselves. When the officers opened the door to the interior of the home, they were rushed by a small boy who was crying and covered in blood. The little boy cried out, "Owie, owie, Mommy!" Officer Diego Aranda removed the boy from the home.

Officers Guzman and Villarreal Jr. continued calling out to the suspect and advanced into a small hallway in the home. As they came closer to the kitchen area of the home the officers noticed shotgun rounds and a shotgun laying on the kitchen floor, just as **Corporal Vidal Farias** arrived on the scene to assist the officers.

Then, Officer Villarreal noticed the suspect squatting behind the kitchen counter, waiting for the officers to advance. The officers ordered the suspect out but instead, he opened fire on the officers, barely missing the heads of Officer Guzman and Corporal Farias. Officer Villarreal immediately returned fire, allowing the officers and corporal to evacuate the home and seek better cover. The officers took cover behind the patrol unit on the street while the suspect continued to shoot at them. Additional backup had been requested and a DPS aircraft arrived on the scene and hovered over the home with the suspect inside. The suspect began shooting into the sky at the aircraft allowing the officers to run to a neighbor's home to seek cover from the continuous gunfire.

Meanwhile, Officer Aranda had reunited the boy with his mother whose clothes were completely soaked in her blood. She was crying out in pain and reached her arms out to hug her little boy, even though she was suffering extreme pain from her lacerations. Officer Aranda comforted the woman as he applied pressure to the woman's wound while the neighbor assisted with the little boy. The mother then began to lose consciousness and began to asphyxiate. Officer Aranda was desperate to get her medical attention. Medical personnel were unable to assist yet because they were directly in front of the suspect's home who was still actively engaging officers with gunfire in the street. They could not exit through the back of the home because it was surrounded by an eight-foot cinderblock wall with no gate.

At that time, the SWAT team sent a notification that they were en route to the scene with an armored vehicle. Once the SWAT team arrived on location the team positioned the armored vehicle in a position to provide cover as they loaded the victims. The SWAT team assisted Officer Aranda in evacuating the victims and then transported the victims to the US Border Control Medics who were awaiting them.

Once the victims were safely in the hands of medical personnel and out of the danger zone, the SWAT team returned to the scene of the suspect's home to negotiate a surrender.

After the entire ordeal, the suspect was found, by a DPS Avatar robot, to be deceased in a back bedroom of the home. It appeared as though the suspect sustained multiple gunshot wounds during the exchange of gunfire and ultimately succumbed to his injuries. The victims in this case have recovered from their injuries.

Mission Patrol Officers Arnolando Villarreal Jr., Oscar Guzman, and Diego Aranda along with Corporal Vidal Farias acted and responded with honor and courage protecting the lives of both the mother and child.

Trooper Armando Martinez
Trooper Austin Hangebruck
Texas Department of Public Safety

The following awards are being presented to **Troopers Armando Martinez and Austin Hangebrauck of the Texas Department of Public Safety** for their valorous life-saving measures performed while recovering a man from a burning vehicle in Edinburg.

On Sunday, May 9th, 2021, while on assignment for Operation Lone Star, **Texas DPS Trooper Armando Martinez** was traveling Northbound on US 281 shortly after 4 in the morning when he began to notice debris on the road. He then came across a pickup truck that had crashed and overturned on the highway just moments before. Trooper Martinez was the initial first responder to stop at the scene and immediately went to check the overturned vehicle for occupants.

That's when he found Mr. Avila lying face down inside the truck near the passenger side, which had caught fire, with his right foot stuck between the steering wheel and the driver's seat. Trooper Martinez tried to communicate with Mr. Avila and shortly realized that Mr. Avila was not fully conscious.

Realizing how dire of a situation was unfolding, Trooper Martinez advised DPS Weslaco Communications over the police radio that Mr. Avila was trapped inside the burning pickup truck and that he needed the fire department immediately. Using all his strength, Trooper Martinez tried to pull Mr. Avila from the truck but could not free his foot or get him through the window which was damaged in the rollover.

Thankfully, **Texas DPS Trooper Austin Hangebrauck** arrived on the scene just in time. Together, the two troopers were able to pull Mr. Avila from the burning truck. Mr. Avila's shirt and upper torso were engulfed in flames. The Troopers removed his shirt and worked to manually extinguish the fire that was still burning his upper torso. Mr. Avila suffered severe burns to his upper torso, head, and face. Just as emergency medical personnel arrived on the scene, Troopers Martinez and Hangebrauck finished extinguishing the fire inside the pickup truck.

Mr. Avila was transported to a local hospital for medical evaluation and was then transported to Brooks Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston due to the severity of his burn injuries. Without the heroic efforts of these two brave Troopers, Mr. Avila could have easily burned alive inside that pickup truck. The valorous actions performed by Troopers Martinez and Hangebrauck on that day were absolutely vital to saving this man's life.

Officer Travis Allen ***Irving Police Department***

This award is being presented to Officer Travis Allen of the Irving Police Department for his heroic actions during an incident at Thomas Jefferson Park on February 19 of 2018 in which he heroically saved a couple from an icy canal.

Officer Allen responded to a call to assist the Irving Fire Department with an incident involving a family who had ventured out onto an ice-covered canal for family picture time when the parents fell through the ice into the frigid water. The ice had not been thick enough to support their body weight nor was the water shallow enough for them to stand, stranding them in the icy water. Moments later, Officer Brendan Fowler arrived on scene and immediately began rescue efforts, grabbing a small rope bag from his vehicle and throwing a lifeline out to the couple.

Officer Allen was the next officer to arrive and acted quickly to communicate with Officer Fowler to develop a rescue plan. The Irving Fire Department arrived next, sliding two ladders out to the victims who had now been submerged in the icy water for 10 minutes. The mother began to succumb to the cold and started to slip under the water at which point Officer Allen took immediate action and crawled out on the ladder to her and held her face above water to prevent her from drowning.

Firefighter Graham crawled out onto the other ladder just as the ice broke beneath Officer Allen dumping him into the icy water. Officer Allen and Firefighter Graham, now exposed to the extremely cold water, worked quickly to lift the mother onto one of the ladders. Officers Stutevoss, Fowler, and Payne then worked together to pull everyone on the ladder off the ice and back onto the shore. Once making it back to the shore, the father was responsive and talking with officers as they assisted him away from the water. The mother was exhausted, unresponsive, and showing signs of hypothermia onset. The Irving Fire Department then transported the victims to the hospital where they were thankfully able to recover from the incident.

While every officer and fire fighter involved in this rescue played a vital role in the success of this recovery, Officer Allen showed extreme valor with his lack of hesitation to address the gravity of the situation. Officer Allen did not hesitate to risk his life and well-being to crawl out onto that ice and save this couple. Thanks to his valorous actions during the incident, the couple was able to return home safely to their children.

David Alaniz, Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 5
Lance Anderson, Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 5
Heath Lawson, Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 5
Orlando Treviño, Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 5

On December 8, 2019, **Sergeant Lance Anderson**, while on his way home, saw a major crash, where a vehicle had struck a tree and the engine compartment was on fire. Sergeant Anderson went up to the vehicle and noticed the driver, although conscious, had a leg that was pinned under the steering column, and he could not get out of the burning vehicle. The fire was spreading rapidly, and the extreme heat made it difficult to work on the extraction of the driver.

Sergeant David Alaniz, while on his way home from an extra job, heard the call on the radio. As he pulled up to the scene, he saw Sergeant Anderson and **Deputy Heath Lawson** attempting to rescue the driver. Sergeant D. Alaniz took out his baton and began prying on the steering column in attempts to free the driver's leg. Deputy H. Lawson was holding the driver up and trying to pull him to safety as this was transpiring.

Sergeant Orlando Trevino arrived on scene while Sergeant Alaniz and Deputy Lawson were using fire extinguishers to try and keep the flames at bay, while attempts were being made to free the driver. The interior of the vehicle was now completely on fire and seconds away from being fully engulfed. As the flames continued to increase and encroach on the driver, Sergeant Trevino acquired a pry bar and began prying the steering column to no avail. After multiple attempts to free the driver by prying the steering wheel, it became apparent that the extraction of the driver was being impaired because the legs to his pants were entangled in the crushed metal under the steering wheel. Sergeant Anderson then took over and was now prying on the steering column, while Sergeant Trevino began using a knife to cut the driver's pants free from the car. At this point, the driver can be heard screaming in pain as the flames had finally reached the interior compartment. Finally, after exhausting all attempts to free the driver, Sergeant Trevino was successful in cutting away the driver's pants from the crushed metal as Sergeant Anderson lifted the dash with the pry bar. At this moment, Deputy Lawson was able to pull the driver completely clear of the car. The driver was pulled to safety and seconds later the vehicle became fully engulfed.

The deputies and sergeants exhibited extreme courage and bravery, without regard to their own safety, during this event which would have ended tragically without their actions. The teamwork that was exhibited on this scene was crucial in the successful extraction of the driver. If not for the combined efforts of those who were using multiple fire extinguishers to keep the fire at bay combined with the heroic efforts of those who were physically extracting the driver, this incident would surely not have ended as well. Due to the extreme heat, Sergeant Trevino and Sergeant Anderson both sustained minor burns to their hands and facial areas and still refused to give up until the driver was out of harm's way. Although the driver sustained multiple broken bones and burns, it is obvious that without the actions of these deputies and sergeants, the driver surely would have perished.

Trooper Melina Justiss
Trooper Justin Basso
Texas Department of Public Safety

On August 31st, 2019, Troopers **Melina Justiss** and Charles Pryor were on routine patrol on Interstate 20 in Midland. On this particular day, they were assigned patrol duties in support of Operation Holiday during the Labor Day weekend. At approximately 3:12 p.m., Troopers Justiss and Pryor observed an older model gold Toyota passenger car on the 1-20 overpass. The vehicle was occupied by a male that was later identified as Seth Ator. Ator had been fired earlier in the day from his job and was actively being sought by Ector County law enforcement. At this time, neither Trooper was aware that Ator was in the vehicle or that he was actively wanted. Trooper Justiss turned around and followed the Toyota as it crossed the overpass and prepared to

enter the westbound lane of 1-20. As Ator prepared to enter 1-20, he failed to signal his intention to merge onto 1-20.

Trooper Justiss activated her emergency lights and prepared to conduct a traffic stop for the violation. As Trooper Justiss followed Ator and prepared for him to stop on the shoulder, she observed Ator lift a rifle from within the Toyota. Trooper Justiss immediately recognized that a weapon was being raised and verbalized to Trooper Pryor that there was a gun. Ator was able to fire off numerous rounds at both Troopers as he and our Troopers were still moving. Ator's rounds struck the front grill and windshield of the patrol unit, entering the front driver and passenger compartment of the patrol unit where Troopers Justiss and Pryor were sitting. Trooper Pryor was struck by two rounds, one to his left cheek and jaw area, and another struck his watch on his left wrist, shattering the watch and embedding shrapnel in his wrist and forearm. Trooper Pryor began bleeding heavily from his face. Trooper Justiss immediately pulled over onto the shoulder and began returning fire with her pistol as Ator drove down the road a short distance and came to a stop. Recognizing that Trooper Pryor was shot, Trooper Justiss immediately got on the radio and notified DPS Communications and surrounding units that Trooper Pryor had been shot and that EMS was needed. She also broadcast over the radio that Ator had a rifle.

During this time, Ator exited his vehicle and began firing additional shots at Troopers Justiss and Pryor as they sat in the patrol unit. Recognizing that she and Trooper Pryor were in a position of disadvantage, Trooper Justiss told Trooper Pryor to get out of the vehicle. As she exited the patrol unit, Trooper Justiss shot several more rounds from her pistol at Ator who was standing outside of his car, methodically taking the time to aim his rifle, actively trying to murder both Trooper Justiss and Pryor. As Trooper Justiss exited the vehicle, she returned fire at Ator. Her cover fire allowed Trooper Pryor to exit the passenger side of the patrol unit and walk to a safer location behind the patrol unit. Ator realized that he was being fired upon, and quickly re-entered his vehicle. Ator fled the scene westbound towards Odessa. Ator would go on a murderous rampage over the next 40 minutes that ultimately resulted in the death of seven innocent civilians and the injury of 22 other people, three of which were peace officers, prior to being killed in another shootout with law enforcement.

Multiple law enforcement agencies responded, including Texas DPS, Odessa Police Department, Ector County Sheriff's Office, Midland Police Department, Midland County Sheriff's Office, and UTPB Police Department. As he drove through multiple city streets in Odessa, firing toward the general public and motorists, local 911 operators were overwhelmed with updates and location information. Law enforcement had difficulty locating Ator as a result and were spread throughout the east end of the city searching for him. To add to the confusion, Ator stole a US Postal vehicle after killing the postal worker who was driving the vehicle.

Trooper Justin Basso drove to State Highway 191, a major roadway on the north side of Odessa, which extends to Midland, after information was broadcast that Ator was seen in the area. Along this roadway are multiple businesses, a movie theater, hotels and a hospital. Trooper Basso first entered the parking lot of Cinergy movie theater, which had been evacuated due to the mass shooting. The parking lot was full of panicked civilians who were trying to leave. Many civilians who evacuated the theater were directed toward the open field at the south end of the business where they were imminently exposed to the threat of death and/or injury from Ator, who was driving in the immediate area.

Trooper Basso, along with Officers from Midland and Odessa Police Departments, observed Ator in the hospital parking lot west of the movie theater and began to pursue Ator. As the two Officers attempted to stop Ator in the hospital parking lot, they were injured from Ator's gunfire.

Trooper Basso, who understood that Ator had fired upon and injured law enforcement officers during the rampage, and at the risk of imminently being fired upon as well, took lead in the pursuit as Ator traveled west toward the movie theater and the open field where many civilians were helplessly exposed. Trooper Basso took immediate action and engaged Ator by firing his M4 rifle through the windshield of his patrol vehicle. He continued to pursue Ator for a short distance until Ator's vehicle was struck and disabled by a Midland Police

Officer with his patrol vehicle. Trooper Basso continued to engage Ator with his M4 rifle and then assisted local law enforcement officers with the approach to and securement of Ator, who died as a result of the firearms engagement by law enforcement.

At the time Trooper Justiss returned fire, Ator was standing and taking aim at both her and Trooper Pryor. Her return fire made Ator give up his position and flee the scene, effectively ending the gun battle. Her actions allowed Trooper Pryor to be safely evacuated and treated by medical personnel, thus saving his life. There is no doubt in my mind that Ator would have continued to shoot at both Troopers until he was successful in killing them. Trooper Justiss' actions in the face of grave danger saved the life of Trooper Pryor as well as her own. Trooper Justiss's gallant and intrepid actions during this incident saved their lives.

Trooper Basso's gallant actions, at risk of his own life, were above and beyond the call of duty. He made selfless decisions to take the lead in the pursuit and engage Ator with his M4 rifle while being fully aware of the imminent danger of being fired upon by Ator at any given moment. His actions clearly assisted in the termination of one of the deadliest mass shootings in Texas, and they reflect the highest degree of honor and duty as Texas Highway Patrol Trooper.

Patrolwoman Celinda Gonzales
Sherman Benys, Jr.
Kingsville Police Department

The following awards are being presented to **Patrolwoman Celinda Gonzales and Sherman Benys, Jr.** of the **Kingsville Police Department** for their valorous actions

Patrolwoman Gonzalez and **Patrolman Benys of the Kingsville Police Department** responded to a call of a male suspect chasing a female around trying to shoot her. It was reported that he had left the area when Patrolwoman Gonzalez and Patrolman Benys arrived on the scene. As Patrolwoman Gonzalez was making contact with the children and witnesses, the offender drove up and began shooting towards her, the offender's small children and witnesses with a Tech-9 rifle. Patrolwoman Gonzalez returned gunfire on the suspect as she herded the children to safety behind a house.

Patrolman Benys also engaged the suspect with gunfire to draw the offender away from Patrolwoman Gonzalez as she herded the children to safety. As he exited his vehicle engaging with the suspect, Patrolman Benys was struck in the left lower pelvic area near a large femoral artery. Patrolwoman Gonzalez continued to take the fight to the suspect, and he returned to his vehicle and drove off. The suspect was soon apprehended.

Patrolwoman Gonzalez was the initial responder that engaged the shooter and herded the children to safety. Her actions certainly saved the children and witnesses. Officer Sherman Benys tragically succumbed to his injuries a few days after the incident. He made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the citizens of his community and his partner.

Corporal Roper Ellison
Deputy Darin Brooks
Polk County Sheriff's Office

The following awards are being presented to **Corporal Roper Ellison and Deputy Darin Brooks of the Polk County Sheriff's Office** for their valorous actions during an incident in which they rescued a disabled man from a burning home.

On that evening, a disabled man in a wheelchair called 911 to report that his house was on fire and that he could not physically get himself off the porch of his burning home. **Corporal Ellison and Deputy Brooks of the Polk County Sheriff's Office** arrived on scene together. In the dashcam video you can see large amount of smoke as they drive toward the house. When the officers arrived at the home you can see that the home is almost completely engulfed in tall red flames that were spreading to the surrounding trees. Corporal Ellison and Deputy Brooks immediately exited their patrol vehicle and without hesitation ran towards the home. They ran across the home's porch seconds before the entire porch was completely engulfed in flames without any type of fire-protection equipment.

With Deputy Brooks at his side, Corporal Ellison lifted the disabled man over his shoulder and carried him away from the burning home and likely death. The officers were then able to safely get the man into their patrol vehicle and get him medical assistance. Both officers walked away with minor burns and went on to continue their shift.

Thanks to the valor and bravery shown by these officers, the disabled man was safely recovered from his burning home. Corporal Ellison and Deputy Brooks undoubtedly saved the man's life.

Deputy Cody Burk
Deputy Ethan Kahla
Chambers County Sheriff's Office
Trooper Forrest Craig Hunter
Texas Department of Public Safety

The following awards are being presented to **Deputies Cody Burk and Ethan Kahla of the Chambers County Sheriff's Office** and **Trooper Forrest Craig Hunter of the Texas Department of Public Safety** for their valorous actions pursuing a suspect who had committed an armed carjacking and shot a deputy.

On August 8th, 2021, Chambers County Deputies were advised of a vehicle heading into Chambers County Jurisdiction that was taken during an armed carjacked. The suspect had previously shot a Harris County Deputy. **Deputy Cody Burk and Deputy Ethan Kahla of the Chambers County Sheriff's Office** responded to the call and located the vehicle. The Deputies then became involved in a pursuit of the armed subject. During the pursuit, the suspect fired multiple shots at the deputies with one shot striking Deputy Burk's vehicle through the front windshield.

Deputies Burk and Kahla continued the pursuit of the suspect while under the barrage of gun fire.

Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Craig Hunter arrived on scene and approached the suspect's vehicle from the opposite direction. He then used his patrol car to strike the suspect's vehicle, permanently disabling the vehicle from further evading. The suspect then quickly exited his disabled vehicle and advanced rapidly towards the Deputies and Troopers. At that time Deputy Kahla was forced to use deadly force to eliminate the continued threat the suspect was posing towards citizens, law enforcement, and emergency personnel.

Trooper Hunter was transported via Life Flight away from the scene immediately following the incident due to injuries he sustained during the vehicle crash and thankfully was able to make a full recovery.

The valorous actions performed by these officers undoubtedly prevented further harms to the citizens of Chambers County or to any additional law enforcement.

Corporal Jose Luis "Speedy" Espericueta Jr.
Patrol Officer Luis Gutierrez

Patrol Officer Sergio Martinez
Corporal Alexandria Leal
Mission Police Department

The following awards are being presented to **Corporal Jose Luis “Speedy” Espericueta Jr., Patrol Officer Luis Gutierrez, Patrol Officer Sergio Martinez, and Corporal Alexandria Leal of the Mission Police Department** for their valorous actions during an incident on June 20, 2019, in which Corporal Jose Luis “Speedy” Espericueta tragically lost his life in the line of duty.

On Thursday, June 20, 2019, **Patrol Officer Luis Gutierrez** was patrolling an area in Mission, Texas when he was waved down by a distraught female driver. The woman revealed that her son, Juan Carlos Chapa Jr. had shot at her car with a handgun which was later recovered at the scene of the crime.

The call was aired out via Mission Police Dispatch and **Corporal Jose Luis “Speedy” Espericueta** proceeded to the location to assist in apprehending the suspect. Corporal Espericueta and other Mission Police Officers then located the subject, matching the description given by his distraught mother. At that time, Corporal Espericueta attempted to make contact with the suspect before exiting his parked patrol vehicle, un-holstering his service weapon, and pointing it at the suspect commanding him to stop. Despite his efforts, the suspect ignored Corporal Espericueta’s commands and began running Eastbound along the fence line toward a resort. Corporal Espericueta took off running in pursuit of the suspect, with Officer Gutierrez joining right behind him. At that time **Officer Sergio Martinez** parked his patrol vehicle at the resort’s entrance and witnessed the suspect run past and then turn around and fire at him, striking the door of his patrol vehicle.

With the suspect still on the run, **Corporal Alexandria Leal** entered the unoccupied parking lot of the resort, exited her vehicle, and engaged the suspect with her service weapon. Officer Leal covered Corporal Espericueta and Officer Martinez who were engaging the suspect from the open parking lot while Officer Gutierrez engaged with the suspect from the East fence line of the resort. The officers continuing engaging with the suspect, striking the defendant several times, causing him to fall to the ground and lose control of his weapon. Corporal Espericueta and Officer Martinez slowly approached the subject laying on the ground with their weapons drawn and commanded him to “Get down, get away,” and “Leave the gun alone,” as he crawled towards his gun. The defendant ignored their commands, reached for his weapon, turned around, and fired directly at Corporal Espericueta and Officer Martinez. The Officers attempted to move out of the line of fire but unfortunately the defendant fatally shot Corporal Espericueta, striking him on the left side of his face.

Officer Gutierrez quickly yelled “Officer down, Officer down,” and called for an ambulance over the police radio. Officer Gutierrez covered Corporal Espericueta who was lying injured on the ground and returned fire on the subject along with Officers Martinez and Leal. The officers were eventually able to handcuff the subject on the ground and conduct a weapons search. The defendant had been shot several times, and despite receiving medical treatment on scene, was pronounced dead after being transported to a regional hospital. Corporal Jose Luis “Speedy” Espericueta Jr. was transported to McAllen Medical Center where he tragically succumbed to his injuries.

Jose Luis “Speedy” Espericueta Jr. was killed in the line of duty protecting the citizens of the great City of Mission, Texas and will forever be remembered as a hero in his community and by his fellow officers. Mission Police Officers Sergio Martinez and Luis Gutierrez, along with Corporal Alexandria Leal acted and responded with honor and courage apprehending this dangerous suspect, protecting the lives of Mission residents and that of their fellow officers. Their valorous actions on that day undoubtedly prevented the situation from ending with additional destruction or fatalities.

Chief Albert Garcia
Captain Tammie McDonald

Sergeant Shawn Wilson
Levelland Police Department
Sheriff Ray Scifres
Hockley County Sheriff's Office
Sergeant Joshua Bartlett
Lubbock County Sheriff's Office

The following awards are being presented to **Chief Albert Garcia, Captain Tammie McDonald, and Sergeant Shawn Wilson of the Levelland Police Department, Sheriff Ray Scifres of the Hockley County Sheriff's Office**, and the late **Sergeant Joshua Bartlett, SWAT Commander of the Lubbock County Sheriff's Office**, for their valorous actions, leadership, and heroism displayed during an active shooter incident on July 15, 2021 in which Sergeant Joshua Bartlett tragically lost his life in the line of duty.

On July 15, 2021, **Chief Albert Garcia, Captain Tammie McDonald, and Sergeant Shawn Wilson of the Levelland Police Department** were among the first officers to respond to a call for a welfare check of a man lying in the street with a rifle. The suspect retreated into his home before officers arrived and negotiations failed once contact was made with the subject. Chief Garcia contacted the Lubbock County Sheriff's Office and requested their SWAT Team, took a command position, and had officers clear the surrounding homes.

Shortly into the incident, the suspect began shooting at officers from the interior of the residence. Sergeant Wilson and Captain McDonald took a position with vantage point across the street from the suspect's location and maintained their position until SWAT arrived. When **Sergeant Joshua Bartlett, SWAT Commander of the Lubbock County Sheriff's Office**, arrived to relieve Sergeant Wilson, Sergeant Wilson refused to quit his post and continued to exchange a barrage of gun fire with the suspect. Both Sergeant Wilson and Sergeant Bartlett were then struck and required immediate medical assistance. Sergeant Wilson was shot in the head and Sergeant Bartlett was struck in the neck.

Sheriff Ray Scifres of the Hockley County Sheriff's Office arrived on scene and, along with Chief Garcia, displayed an uncommon valor by running over half a block from the Command Center to the fallen officer's location while under direct fire. Chief Garcia and Sheriff Scifres immediately began giving aid to the wounded officers and continued to subject themselves to the intense barrage of gun fire from the suspect. The suspect was intentionally attempting to shoot the officers that came to aid the wounded officers. Sergeant Bartlett was more severely wounded, and he was removed from the scene first.

Captain McDonald remained with Sergeant Wilson, continuing to subject herself to the intense gun fire while administering to the wounded officers. While Captain McDonald and Chief Garcia continued giving aid, Sheriff Scifres, in total disregard for his own life, took the wounded officer's rifle and provided cover until the wounded officers were stabilized and ready to be extracted from the kill zone. Sheriff Scifres then relinquished his position as a cover officer and grabbed a section of the backboard along with Chief Garcia and others to run the injured Sergeant Wilson to the ambulance, who was extricated from the immediate threat area and transported to the hospital.

Sergeant Wilson sustained a devastating injury and was rushed into surgery to remove bullet fragments from his brain. Thankfully, he was able to recover from his injuries. Unfortunately, Sergeant Bartlett succumbed to his injuries. Sergeant Josh Bartlett, SWAT Commander of the Lubbock County Sheriff's Office gave his life responding to the call of duty.

The brave, exceptionally valorous actions performed by these officers undoubtedly saved lives. These officers worked together across multiple departments and went above and beyond the call of duty without hesitation to protect the community and stop an active shooter. Captain McDonald, who was on scene for 15 hours, personally located Sergeant Wilson's wife, Lauren Wilson, and escorted her to the University Medical Center in

Lubbock, TX before returning to the scene to assist with the investigation. All the officers involved displayed unwavering commitment and dedication to their fellow officers and the community.